Militant America and Jesus Christ

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THE SYRIAN CHRIST.

A FAR JOURNEY. Illustrated.

MILITANT AMERICA AND JESUS CHRIST

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BY

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To the soldiers of democracy
on every battlefield this
book is gratefully
inscribed

MILITANT AMERICA AND JESUS CHRIST

I

In another and more extensive publication [1] I undertook to give to the readers of the Bible "an Oriental guide to afford Occidental readers a more intimate view of the original intellectual and social environment of this sacred literature." As one of the Master's countrymen, born and brought up under almost the same conditions

[1] *The Syrian Christ.* (Houghton Mifflin Company.)

which surrounded him as a Syrian youth and teacher, I have naturally an inward realization of the meanings of many of his sayings which a son of an alien race is not likely to have. And although such an inward sense cannot always be definitely and clearly presented in words, nevertheless it serves a writer in my circumstances as an informing spirit of the tangible word, and thus communicates itself to the reader.

In this brief volume, my purpose is to deal with and to center attention upon a phase of Jesus' mind and teaching which I did not feel called upon to emphasize in "The Syrian Christ."

In the present stupendous conflict in which the nations of the earth are engaged, nothing can be more natural for Christians than that they should turn earnestly and eagerly to the New Testament, and through it to interrogate their Supreme Master, and, if possible, know his attitude toward the spirit and purpose of the momentous events of the times which are rocking the world to its very center. It is, indeed, of vital importance to the millions of Christians to whom the New Testament, whose life-center is Christ, offers the daily sacrament of life at the home and Church altar, to know whether their engaging in a defensive

war receives support and justification from the Great Teacher, or unqualified condemnation.

It is of most vital significance to America, the fundamental principles of whose organized life are peace, freedom, and brotherhood, and which, because of her love for peace and international concord, has allowed herself to stand utterly defenseless throughout her history as a nation, to know whether her participation in this war is or is not contrary to the mind of Christ, whose Gospel is the Holy Scripture of the large majority of her citizens.

Countless persons in this country,

of all creeds, and even of no creed, have yielded to this desire, which, as might have been expected, became more insistent and more intense when the American Government concluded to join actively in the war on the side of Germany's enemies.

The honest "pacifist" and the "conscientious objector" claim to know, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Jesus was, is, and ever shall be a "peace-at-any-price man." To them the Nazarene is the world's supreme non-resistant, whatever the provocation. Therefore, by taking up arms for any cause whatsoever, America is virtually fighting against Jesus Christ and

violating the most sacred principles of the dominant religion of her people. These honest exponents of Christ have chosen from among his sayings such passages as can easily be interpreted so as to fit their own preconceptions, and have made them the basis of what seemed to them a conclusive and unshakable argument against war, aggressive or defensive. To them the religion of the New Testament is that of non-resistance.

But aside from these honest and sincere pacifists, the events of the times have revealed an obnoxious brood of wolves in sheep's clothing among our citizenship, enemies of American lib-

erty in the guise of friends, who pose as humanitarians and use certain of Christ's precepts ostensibly in the interest of peace, but in reality to mask their traitorous machinations against the United States Government, and to aid the designs of the rapacious Teuton against the freedom of the world.

As a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as one of his countrymen, and as an alien-born citizen of this country who believes that American citizenship is the most precious gift this world has to give, I feel impelled to publish these pages as my small contribution to the patriotic literature of the times, and as a testimony to

my Spiritual Master, whom I firmly believe that, by taking up arms against tyranny and aggression, America has not deserted.

I want every soldier who is fighting the battle of freedom and the right, against those who are seeking to destroy these divine gifts, to feel that he is doing the work of a *Christian* soldier. I want every mother who has torn from her heart and home a son and has sent him willingly to the battle line, to feel that her son is not fighting against Jesus Christ nor trampling under foot that divine love which wells forth so copiously in her own breast. I want every American

mother who has a son at the front to feel that the precious gift she has given to the Nation has been offered not upon the altar of Moloch, but upon the altar of Christ and of the sacred duty which every free man owes to mankind.

The present war is not a *mere* war. It is a moral earthquake which calls for the supreme choice by individuals and nations between right and wrong, liberty and bondage. This conflict seems to me to uncover the hidden secrets of the universe itself and to reveal to the human vision the primordial and everlasting struggle between good and evil. From the dawn of

creation and in order to establish stability in nature and concord among men, the hammers of the Eternal have been crushing down cruelty and aggression. In such a conflict I cannot think of Christ as being neutral. He who stands for us as the supreme manifestation of the Creative Spirit on earth does not, *cannot*, will that the "mailed fist" should not be resisted, but be allowed to crash its way in the world to tyrannical supremacy "in the interest of peace." I do not so know Christ. I do not believe the New Testament presents such a hopelessly and helplessly neutral Christ.

II

BELIEVING that by making Jesus a peace-at-any-price man the pacifist is decidedly wrong, I do not wish in the least to commit a similar error by clothing the Master in the uniform of a general. The Man of Galilee was neither of these personages. He was a religious teacher, a revealer of the higher life, who after the manner of Oriental teachers went about *conversing* with his kinsmen by means of parable and story about the kingdom of God for which they were looking through distorting theological medi-

ums. His short ministry was occupied by issues which did not bear directly upon the problem of war as it is before us to-day.

Jesus did not do the work of a statesman-prophet, such as Isaiah was. He had no occasion apparently to discourse on political science and the rights and duties of a nation in international affairs. Long before his time his little nation had been hopelessly crushed as a political unit under the heels of mighty conquerors. Any political agitation in Jesus' day for the purpose of reëstablishing the independence of the Jewish nation could have resulted only in greater oppres-

sion and humiliation for the "chosen race." We have no evidence whatever that Jesus was not a patriot. He loved his nation, wept for its miseries, and labored for its regeneration and elevation. To Him, however, the greatest service under the existing circumstances which could be rendered to Israel, and to the world through Israel, was the spiritual revitalizing of that race's soul, and not a political revolution.

What reason have we, then, to conclude that, because Jesus did the work of a religious teacher exclusively he was unalterably opposed to defensive as well as aggressive war, or that he

was a "pacifist," in the sense which this term has acquired during the present war? The answer is that such reason is to be found in the Beatitudes and the Master's charge to his disciples when he sent them forth to preach the glad tidings of the Kingdom. Did he not say, "Blessed are the peacemakers"? Did he not command his disciples to go into the world without even a staff to defend them from beasts and robbers?

Most certainly. But what other commands and admonitions could any one expect a religious teacher or even a secular educator to give to his disciples in *normal times?* Can it be

reasonably expected that any such teacher should say, "Blessed are the trouble-makers"? and to warn young preachers and teachers that as they go into the world to enlarge the horizon of human life they must be armed with bowie knives and pistols? Read the graduation addresses and baccalaureate sermons which were delivered in the colleges and seminaries of America, say in the twenty years immediately preceding the present war, and I feel safe in saying that you will not find a single paragraph in them that breathes the spirit of war. They all counsel peace, urge national and international concord, idealize human

brotherhood, and exalt the enduring virtues of gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control. They all speak of the things which mankind always expects religious teachers and other leaders of thought and instructors of the people to advocate and urge mightily upon the minds of their fellow-men.

Would it not have been very easy to conclude from such addresses and sermons that all their authors were "pacifists," but for the severe test which the present war brought? How could any one have successfully asserted that the large majority of such religious teachers and educators would

favor war, nay, urge it with all the energies of their souls, when human freedom and other sacred rights were threatened by mighty and unscrupulous foes? But the supreme test did come, and the souls of those men did not fail. The colleges and seminaries of the country have been converted into training camps, and the voices of those teachers of peace are now calling brave men to fight for the defense of democracy and civilization.

"New occasions teach new duties." And it is most reassuring, indeed, to know that even the gentlest souls realize that when a hyena is snarling in the front yard, the giving of a talk to

the children on "kindness to animals" is not the best means to meet the demands of the occasion.

During Jesus' brief career as a teacher no such crisis as the one which confronts us to-day presented itself. He taught the precepts of peace in a normal period in the history of the ancient world. He was no political revolutionary. The questions which were put to him pertained largely to individual spiritual needs, and to his people's expectations of the Kingdom. The Master lived a sacrificial life. His chief concern was not his own personal safety. His mission was to lead the world to the Father, to reconcile

men to God and thus save them from the sins and miseries of this life. He realized what dangers beset his way, and was ready to pay the price of his ideals.

As an Oriental teacher he went about teaching the gospel of reconciliation in an intimate rather than a formal manner. I can see him going from place to place in the towns and villages of Palestine scattering the seeds of the higher life, and can see groups of people leaving their simple occupations and flocking to the "holy man" to hear and touch him in order that "his blessing" might come upon them. After the manner of the East, the people came to him with their sins and

their diseases, because out of such holy men "a power came and healed the believers."

Jesus gave no formal discourses on abstract themes, and had no interest in philosophical generalizations. What is called "scientific systematic thinking" characterized his teaching no more than it does any sort of friendly conversation, or any intimate message of spiritual helpfulness. On many subjects his attitude never would have been known but for the questions which his hearers asked him. Thus, for an example, his view of marital relations "in the resurrection," or life in the kingdom of God, in all proba-

bility never would have been known but for the question which the Sadducees put to him:[1] "Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first married and deceased, and having no seed left his wife unto his brother; in like manner the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And after them all, the woman died. In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her." In his answer Jesus' view of this difficult question is revealed. "In the resurrection," says he, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven."

[1] Matt. xxii: 23, Revised Version.

Perhaps we never should have known Jesus' attitude toward secular government, but for another similar question which was put to Him by the Pharisees in order that they "might ensnare him." But for his answer to that question it would have been very easy for any one, who felt disposed to do so, to assert without fear of contradiction that Jesus never entertained the idea of obedience to secular rulers. In the chapter from which I have just quoted we are told that the Pharisees said to Jesus: "Teacher, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of

men. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a denarius.[1] And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

[1] A coin worth nearly seventeen cents.

III

Suppose now that in one of their curious moments the leaders of his people had come to Jesus and asked Him: "Teacher, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to go to war?" What would his answer have been? In my judgment the Master would have answered such a hypothetical question in the negative. He would have taken a decisive stand for peace. He would have condemned aggressive war most unqualifiedly. He would have reminded his people most persuasively that peace is the normal way of life,

and war a hateful abnormality; that war is medicine, but peace is food. He would have pictured to his people the horrors of the battlefield and the desolation which war leaves behind it in home and city. He would perhaps have allowed himself as a seer to think of war as a remote possibility, a last desperate measure to be resorted to only after all efforts of reason and the resources of noble, sincere patience had been exhausted. Jesus of Nazareth could not and would not have answered such a question by a plain, cold "yes"!

Nor can I think of any educator, secular or religious, of any public-

spirited citizen, of any good and intelligent parent, or of a faithful public servant as assuming on such a question any different attitude from that which I think Jesus would have assumed.

And it was precisely this noble attitude which America assumed when first this war "winged its wide desolation." The vast majority of American citizens of all ranks deplored this catastrophe and cried for peace within their own borders and in the world at large. The peaceful instinct of America asserted itself in the college, the pulpit, the legislature, and the home, and the nation cried as with one voice, "Keep out of war!" America's pa-

tience became a by-word among even the smallest nations of the earth. She would remain out of war *as a free nation*, but could not. The price of peace — her freedom and honor — proved too high for her to pay.

Suppose, on the other hand, that in time of actual danger this question had been put to Jesus: "Teacher, what thinkest thou? A great terror is upon us. A mighty nation lusting for world-dominion has come forth to battle and to conquer. For a whole generation her Government has been shaping the minds of her citizens to fit this purpose. For a whole generation she has been beating the ploughshares into cannon,

and the pruning hooks into rifles and bayonets. For years she has infested the whole world with spies, ranging in rank from ambassadors to housemaids. Her armies, thoroughly trained for battle, are like the sand of the seashore in numbers. She has armed the earth, the sky, and the waters under the earth. Her 'Day' has come! She has opened her mouth and said, 'International obligations and treaties are mere scraps of paper, and necessity [*her necessity*] knows no law.' Her legions have come forth like dragons of steel. Her howitzers have crashed their way through neutral, unoffending countries, 'bellowing victory, bellow-

ing doom.' She has put to the sword men, women, and children, she has terrorized the seas, sunk hospital ships as well as merchantmen, bombarded defenseless towns and cities, and carried away as 'war tribute' the hard earnings of innocent conquered peoples. She has incited three hundred million Mohammedans to rise and massacre their Christian neighbors, has wantonly destroyed homes and vineyards and temples of worship, and tortured her prisoners of war. This mighty nation is sweeping whole countries with fire and the sword, and threatening the very foundation of human freedom. If she realizes her dream of empire she

will put the whole world for generations to come under the iron heel of autocratic rule. Teacher, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful for us to rise and resist the aggression of this mighty power by force of arms, or covet bondage for ourselves and our children?"

Is it possible for any one to think that Jesus Christ would have answered such a question by saying, "No, let the giant have his way, resist him not"? Would he not have said rather, "They that take the sword [for aggression] shall perish with the sword; arise, ye brave, and check the tide of lust for worldly power and dominion. For in

such a cause whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life, the same shall save it."

Would Jesus Christ really be the savior of the world and the conservator of its nobler life, if he let such brute forces have their way, undisputed and unresisted? Did he not dispute and resist the oppressors of the souls of his people? Listen to his words: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte,

and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Are these the words of helpless pacifism and of slavish non-resistance? Did Jesus on this occasion really dispense with retribution, because he deferred it and spoke of it as "damnation" that is to come? It is not at all reasonable to expect the resistance of a religious teacher to be expressed in a fist-fight with other religious teachers, and that because in this case Jesus was satisfied with rebukes (which, by the way, are no less painful than sword

thrusts), he was a confirmed pacifist of the type extant in these times.

What did Jesus mean by the saying, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword"? This utterance has been seized upon by pacifists as the main support of their position. They have urged it upon the attention of America with the authority of the Christ. But here again they have wrongly discerned the Scriptures. In these words Jesus speaks of the eternal law of retribution, and plainly justifies the taking of the sword against those who would use it in wars of aggression. How else can this saying be true? How else could those who take the sword

perish by the sword, except the invaded and oppressed peoples rise in defense of home and altar, and by the sword put the aggressor down? By taking up arms against those who would subdue and rule other peoples by the sword, America is proving the truth of this Scriptural saying.

IV

CAREFUL reading of Jesus' sayings will show clearly that he never refrained from using the language of force. He drew his illustrations from the world of war and retribution, as well as from the world of peace. I do not wish even to imply in the remotest sense that I think Jesus ever meant to encourage the use of force or the cultivation of the arts of war. To us he stands forever as the teacher of peace and good-will, and every Christ-like man must be a hater of war. But to *hate* war is one thing, and to *escape*

war, as long as there are those who like it, is quite another. We all hate a surgical operation, but when the necessity for such an ordeal comes, the only sensible way is to meet it, with courage and resolution.

In the first place, Jesus' whole life on the earth was a battle with the evil influences. Not for an instant did he believe, teach, or practice compromise with antagonistic forces, nor yielding ground to them. The life center of the Gospel message is the thought that if one wants permanent peace one must first vanquish the powers of evil. Here there is no peace without victory. Jesus did not leave us in any uncer-

tainty with regard to this. In the tenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, the thirty-fourth verse, we have his own declaration: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Whatever the nature of the "sword" in this passage may be, the obvious fact is that this language is not that of a peace-at-any-price man; not the language of slavish submission, but of manly resistance.

Again, though a hater of bloodshed, Jesus recognized that with humanity being as it is war "must needs be." In the thirteenth chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, the seventh verse, the Master says, "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not troubled: *for such things must needs be;* but the end shall not be yet." In this passage we are told that wars are likely to come, even to the very hour when the kingdom of heaven is to come on the earth. So long as the world shall have "irresponsible governments" like that of Germany, the danger of war will continue to be. The surest way to a permanent peace is that the powers of

democracy — the lovers of peace — should join forces and "shake the spoiler down."

Another illustration which the Master draws from the world of war is found in the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, the thirty-first verse: "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." Let me repeat that I do not believe for a moment that Jesus ever

meant to strengthen the spirit of war in the world. Yet in this passage he shows plainly that when an invader is approaching, those whose lands and wealth the invader means to take should first consult whether they can resist him. "*Or else*" send an ambassage and desire conditions of peace. It does not seem from this that the Master would favor having an invader do what he pleases, and the invaded remain "Christian pacifists."

In another Scriptural passage we find a striking illustration of the fact that Jesus was not a man of one idea, regardless of circumstances. In the twenty-second chapter of St. Luke's

Gospel we have the solemn picture of the Last Supper. The Master shared that fraternal meal with his disciples in the shadow of a great crisis, when the hand of him who should betray him was with his on the table. On that great occasion Jesus preached to his disciples the gospel of service: "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doeth service."

Yet on the eve of that great crisis the thought of self-defense crossed the Master's mind. Not, however, his own self-defense, as subsequent events proved, but he felt anxious about his disciples. He would impress them

with the gravity of the situation. In the thirty-fifth verse we have these words of his: "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, *But now*, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: *and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.* . . . And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough."

Let me first ask, How did it happen that the disciples were found on this occasion to have swords? "Here are two swords," they said to their Mas-

ter. One answer only can be given here. The great crisis of Gethsemane was approaching and seemingly the disciples *had not been taught by their Master* that after all peaceful means had failed the use of force in self-defense was wrong. Therefore some of them were armed for the occasion. There was a time when I sent you without the means for self-defense (for apparently there was no need for such means) *but now* "he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."

It was precisely this thought which the President of the United States expressed to his countrymen when he

issued his declaration of war against Germany. Heretofore the policy of the United States has been controlled by the spirit of peace. We have been going without a "staff" to defend ourselves against possible foes for more than a century. Our example elicited only scorn from Germany. But for the British fleet our coasts, our wealth, and our liberty would have been at Germany's mercy. *In the past* we stood defenseless, *but now* we can no longer do so, with safety to the country and her honor. Let us not be a people of one idea, regardless of circumstances. *Now* "he that hath no sword" *must* acquire one.

From the passages I have just quoted, even a pacifist, I believe, can see that while our Gospel is a message of peace and good-will, it is not a message of helpless submission to rapacious aggressors.

V

But I do not wish in the least to ignore those sayings of Christ which seem to preach pacifism, and nothing else. In the fifth chapter of the Gospel by St. Matthew, beginning with the thirty-eighth verse, we read: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And

whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

We can make these words mean complete and unqualified non-resistance and subjection to aggression only

by tearing them out, not only from the rest of the New Testament, but from their setting in Oriental thought and life, and by ignoring the conduct of the Master himself. For a detailed account of the Oriental manner of speech I must refer the reader to my larger work.[1] To me, as one who was brought up under almost the identical conditions of life which formed the Master's own environment, these sayings are perfectly natural and perfectly clear. As tribes and clans we lived a life of mutual antagonism; blood relationship only formed for us a center of

[1] *The Syrian Christ*, the chapter entitled "The Oriental Manner of Speech," and its subdivisions.

unity.[1] Even among the inhabitants of the same town, each clan considered the other clans as its enemies. The slightest provocation precipitated an inter-clannish fight. So did the ancient Israelites live, not only with alien clans, but among the "chosen people" themselves, to a considerable extent.

It is amazing to me now, when I recall the days of my youth in Syria, to think how slight were the causes which often brought about a fight among individuals and clans. A quarrel between two children of two

[1] See my autobiography, *A Far Journey*, the first two chapters.

different clans, or even of two houses of the same clan; a "scrap" between two women at the fountain arising from a dispute as to whose turn it was to fill her jar first; a difference of opinion at a funeral as to what clan or house should take a certain position in the procession, or lift the bier first when the time came to carry the dead to the place of burial; rivalry in a singing match at a wedding; as well as graver issues.

Once upon a time, while on a journey after the wearisome Oriental fashion, a cousin of mine and I sought rest and food "in the heat of the day" at a wayside inn. There we found about

half a dozen travelers resting in the friendly shelter of the old rude structure. In a corner of the inn there was a small heap of silk cocoons on a straw tray. The informality of social intercourse in the East, especially at such places, led the small company to carry on conversation with one another. The silk cocoons awakened the curiosity of one of the travelers who ventured to estimate the weight of the precious products of the silkworm. "They must weigh one *occa*" [about two pounds and a half], says the man. "Not so much," says another, giving a lower estimate. The disputing went on until, before the inn-keeper was

permitted by the heated disputants to appeal to the scales for a final decision, a fight occurred, after the cherished Oriental way of slapping in the face.

Now, in view of these facts, even as so briefly stated, can any one fail to realize the Master's meaning in these hyperbolic Oriental sayings? Was it not most natural for Christ to advise his fellow-countrymen to live with one another on terms of mutual friendliness, and not on terms of mutual antagonism; to cherish love, and not hatred, and not to be so quick to render evil for evil? Do we not want him to speak these same words to us to-

day in a fashion which the Western world can readily understand, and to admonish Germany to teach in her schools, not hatred, but good-will toward other nations?

Personally I feel that it is my duty, as well as privilege as a disciple of Christ, to pray for every thief and murderer in the world, but I should consider it most unchristian conduct, if a thief broke into my house and threatened my family with death, for me to stand aside and let him have his way. I should consider it downright disloyalty to Jesus Christ and to every Christian ideal to allow any man to destroy my defenseless neighbor's

house and dishonor his women, if I could at all prevent him from doing so, either by moral suasion or physical force. It is, I believe, the duty of Christian nations to have good-will toward Germany, but not to allow Germany to subdue and rule them by the sword, so long as they are able to resist her aggression. If it is not to be meaningless, good-will cannot allow evil to have its way in the world.

Jesus tells us that we must be instrumentalities of peace and good-will in order that we may be "the children of our Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on

the just and on the unjust." This is most true. God sends his gifts to all men, but both the Scriptures and experience teach us that those who *misuse* the divine gifts are *punished* by a divine law, punished right here in this world, to say nothing of the world to come. Is this law of retribution outside God's plan? Does it come from another source that is not God? In what sense, then, did Jesus threaten the Pharisees, whom he called a "generation of vipers," with retribution, or, as the Scriptural expression is, "damnation"? *Is it not because Jesus was convinced that, although the Father bestows his gifts on all men to use, he*

punishes those who do misuse those gifts? No doubt Jesus loved the Pharisees and prayed for them, although they "despitefully" used him, but his love and prayer did not prevent him from *resisting* those teachers, for their own good, as well as for the good of others.

Let me now call attention to Jesus' own conduct with reference to those sayings. Take for an example the saying, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Literally understood, and detached from its Oriental setting, this passage means that a Christian should submit to every demand made upon him, rather

than enter into a dispute with those who command him. But Jesus corrects this erroneous impression by his own actual conduct. In the thirteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel,[1] the thirty-first verse, occurs the following passage: "In that very hour there came certain Pharisees, saying to him, Get thee out, and go hence: for Herod would fain kill thee. And he said unto them, Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected. Nevertheless I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following: for it

[1] Revised Version.

cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

Here the evidence is clear that Jesus did not mean to teach slavish obedience to unreasonable demands. He not only refused to go two miles at the command of the Pharisees and of Herod, but did not move a single inch. "Go and say to that fox that I will not desert my post nor shirk my duty, come what will."

So also a Herod of the nineteenth century, the great Kaiser, sent his emissaries to say to the Government of the United States of America: "Behold, I am engaged in a great war. I have crushed Belgium, overrun France,

and given Serbia to fire and the sword. My armies control nations and peoples from the North Sea to the Euphrates. America, be warned, and keep out of the path of my ambition. Have no dealings with my enemies. Keep off the seas. I, the Kaiser, warn your citizens to stay at home; for I shall sweep the seas with my submarines which the genius of my people has perfected, and send to the bottom your citizens, whatever their errand may be on the great deep. Therefore seal your ports tightly and keep all your ships in their home waters. Those of your citizens I have already given to the sharks should be to you a suffi-

cient warning that I mean what I say. My hundred thousand spies are in your midst, commanded to terrorize your land, dislocate your industries, and intimidate your statesmen. Be instructed, therefore, you exasperatingly rich Yankees, and fear me, for I am the Kaiser!"

Then America, nobly patient, peace-loving America, answered those emissaries, and said: "Go and say to that tyrant, we are freeborn and will not submit to your mandates. So long as we have men in whose veins flows heroic blood; so long as we have women who disdain living with cowardly husbands and sons, we will not submit.

We will pour our wealth into the war-chest by the thousand millions, we will convert our colleges into training camps, our factories into arsenals, and our schools and churches into hospitals, for the sake of our freedom and the freedom of the world; we will if need be sell our coats and buy swords by which to combat your autocratic ambition, but we will not submit. Our sword is drawn, and we shall not sheathe it until we have made the world safe for democracy!"

Take again Jesus' other saying: "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Now those to whom Jesus di-

rected these remarks understood him fully. They knew also that "the letter killeth." This manner of speech is that of our people in the East to this day. Its purpose is to convey impressions and not to establish hard-and-fast definitions. The intention of these passages is to make tranquil living a disposition among men, and not to encourage brutal men to smite and to kill, which conduct cannot fail to be encouraged by a literal compliance with this command.

Let us turn to the Gospel and see what *practical* interpretation Jesus himself gives this passage. In St. John's Gospel, the eighteenth chap-

ter, and the nineteenth verse, we read: "The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"

Jesus did not turn the other cheek to the brutish smiter; he *protested* against the injustice, and his protest is one of our noblest assets. He implied also that an evil-doer might be punished, but not an innocent man who spoke as respectfully to the high priest as Jesus did. It does not seem to me that it can be so difficult now to understand that Jesus did not mean by this familiar passage to instill into his hearers the idea of slavish non-resistance. It is inconceivable to me that Jesus should assign to good-will only helplessness and deny to love the right to administer corrective punishment.

We will, I think, understand more

clearly, Jesus' attitude toward the necessity of the use of physical force in the defense of great principles by holding in contrast two other scenes in his own life. The one scene is presented to us in the twenty-seventh chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is before Caiaphas, the high priest, where "the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put him to death." The statement convinces us that the Master was in the hands of a mob, who cried, "He is guilty of death." "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy

unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" Here no protestations on his part could have availed anything. Nor could one reasonably expect a person like Jesus turning upon a mad mob and engaging them in a fist-fight. We could not imagine even men who waged great wars, such as Pericles, Marcus Aurelius, and Abraham Lincoln, doing such a thing. So Jesus stood in sublime and dignified silence before his assailants. He knew and accepted the risks of his mission, and now "his hour has come."

The other scene, however, teaches us how a noble person and a peace-lover may justly use physical force.

In the second chapter of St. John's Gospel, the thirteenth verse, we read: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made a scourge [whip] of small cords, he drove all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." In the same account (Luke XIX: 46) the concluding sentence is, "My house is

the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Here we find a group of Oriental traders in the court of the temple, a scene which is very familiar to me. The money-changers were not bankers, but just money-changers, who exchanged small coins for big coins at a small discount. Their small showcases are placed on tables and contain a variety of small coins. The owners sit by those tables and wait on those who come to change pounds or dollars for smaller pieces of money, and charge them a small amount as "exchange cost." They are found in all Oriental cities, and I have often dealt with

them myself. Those traders did Jesus no personal harm. The record does not tell us that they even cast upon him a contemptuous glance. They were simply minding their own business.

But their business desecrated a holy place and violated the sanctity of a holy ideal. The realization of this awakened in Jesus that sense of duty which is above fear, stronger than death and deep as eternity itself. And the writer of the Gospel of John adds significantly to this account a quotation from the sixty-ninth psalm, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." He who would not defend himself from the assaults of a mad mob, or

a cruel officer of the State, flamed with righteous indignation against those who made his Father's house, the place of prayer and spiritual aspiration, a market-place. The ideal he defended belongs to the whole human race. It is the ideal of the soul and its divine refuge amidst the surging of petty ambitions and worldly desires. So the Son of Man forged his own weapon and struck with it as the defender of humanity's eternal heritage.

VI

LET every soldier who is fighting for the world's freedom and for the perpetuation of democratic institutions find in the Master his supreme example. Let every American soldier "be strong in the Lord." Let him take courage and inspiration from the thought that America is in this war to give and not to receive, to minister and not to be ministered unto, and to give of her own life for the salvation of the world. Here it is not ours to think of war as killing or being killed, any more than our Master stopped to speculate

about the injury he might inflict upon those who desecrated the temple, and the property he might destroy in applying the cleansing rod. Of one thing he was conscious and of that only: a great ideal was being destroyed, and it was his duty to defend and preserve it. The destruction which was necessary to enable him to do his sacred duty, and set a supreme example to the ages, was not to be compared with the preservation of the great principles which the generations of men needed to live by.

Of one thing and of that only America must be conscious in this great crisis. There is a mighty army in the

field seeking to destroy the fabric of free institutions, and to extend autocratic rule over the nations of the earth. The masters of that army scorn the counsel of reason and the imploring of good-will. However strongly we may hate war and love peace, those who would be conquerors of the world have not been willing to share our sentiments. By force of arms they seek to conquer us, and by force of arms we are compelled to meet them.

Let every American mother surrender her son to God and to this great and sacred duty of "making the world safe for democracy." In life and in

death we are in God's hands. It is his divine will that men should be free, and in the deep of the Eternal Heart is the law of sacrifice.

THE END

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